

MESAPAMEA SPECIES (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE) IN SHROPSHIRE
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Mesapamea didyma Esp. (= *secalella* Remm) and *M. secalis* L. are two closely allied species of noctuid moth which are at present considered indistinguishable by superficial characters. They have only recently been separated (Remm, 1983) and their nomenclature revised (Lempke, 1988); up to 1985 only *secalis* was thought to occur in Britain. Since then genitalia examination has shown both *secalis* and *didyma* to be present in approximately equal numbers in many localities throughout the British Isles (Skinner, 1984 and pers. comm.).

As part of a current review of the Lepidoptera of Shropshire the presence and relative proportions of *M. didyma* and *M. secalis* were studied by examining the genitalia from a complete year's sample of *Mesapamea* spp. from the Rothamsted Insect Survey light trap at Preston Montford Field Centre (Site no. 382, OS grid SJ 433 143). The criteria for separation established by Jordan (1986) were used.

A total of 97 individuals were examined, seven of which were *didyma*. This represents approximately 7% of the catch and is the first record of this species for Shropshire. The results are tabulated below:

	July			August												Sep.			total				
	25	29	31	6	8	10	11	12	13	15	16	17	18	19	21	22	23	25		27	28	12	
<i>didyma</i> males	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
females	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<i>secalis</i> males	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	3	12	4	1	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	42
females	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	2	3	2	2	11	3	3	7	2	1	0	1	3	1	0	48

The small proportion of *didyma* in the sample prevents detailed comment on the phenology of this species. However, it is apparent that the adults are present throughout the flight period of *secalis*.

There were no superficial characters which could be used to separate the two species. This supports the views of Skinner (1984) and Agassiz (1986).

Having established the presence of *didyma* in Shropshire further studies are required of future catches at Preston Montford and at other localities to determine its abundance and distribution within the County.

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BOOK TALK 10.— Problems facing those who rear lepidoptera can sometimes be solved by reference to a good practical guide. Thus, one of the most useful handbooks ever written for the macrolepidopterist, and still serviceable after 75 years, is L.W. Newman and H.A. Leeds, *Text Book of British Butterflies and Moths* (St Albans, 1913). Besides furnishing one with an abundance of valuable tips, this book is perhaps unique in that with virtually every species is given the manner of pupation. Take for instance *Acronycta alni* (Alder) on page 32, under the "Food-plants and Rearing Hints" column, is this worthy wrinkle: ". . . food-plant [species] first used must not be changed throughout, larva devours cast skin at each moult or will die; requires dead wood or virgin cork for pupation, earth is useless."

A curious little item is the first edition of Edmund Sandars, *A Butterfly Book for the Pocket*, published in 1939 by Oxford University Press. This has unusual silver metallic printing for the appropriate markings of the wings of the fritillaries, as well as for those of the wings of some other butterflies. It is also the first book to use distribution maps for each butterfly species.

Annotated copies are often interesting, especially if the writer is one with considerable experience of the subject. My copy of J.F. Stephens' *List of the Specimens of British Animals in the Collection of the British Museum Pt. V — Lepidoptera* (1850), formerly belonged to Octavius Pickard-Cambridge (1828-1917), the celebrated arachnologist, lepidopterist and all round naturalist. It is interleaved and contains numerous annotations by him.

Previous Book Talks appeared in the *Record* as hereunder: (1) **90**: 186, 1978. (2) **91**: 280, 1979. (3) **92**: 289, 1980. (4) **93**: 231, 1981. (5) **94**: 121, 1982. (6) **95**: 247, 1983. (7) **96**: 272, 1984. (8) **98**: 210-211, 1986. (9) **99**: 232, 1987. J.M. CHALMERS-HUNT. 1 Hardcourts Close, West Wickham, Kent.